

Our Challenge Our Choice Our Future

David Griffiths

The purpose of this paper is to provide a basis for the development of consultation paper to be developed and distributed to CFV members.

A consultation process requires purpose and content.

The main challenges for the Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd are twofold – internal and external.

The internal challenges include:

A divergent and disparate co-operative ‘movement’ that does not recognize each other and is not meaningfully committed to co-operation between co-operatives.

The inability and/or unwillingness of the co-operative movement to popularize and aggressively advocate the co-operative option in public policy debate.

An inability and/or unwillingness to be clear and explicit about and for the co-operative option as neither an extension of the state or an investor-owned capitalist enterprise.

The continued demutualization of co-operatives and co-operative like businesses eg. Pivot and Warrnambool Cheese and Butter Factory.

The external challenges include:

A public policy vacuum that does not engage co-operation as a serious option for public policy choices.

Less and less people are aware of co-operatives and the contribution they have made and are making to economic democracy and economic growth.

The investor-owned option is considered the de facto and normal option for organizing the economy and society.

Professional adviser ignorance of or opposition to the co-operative option.

The absence of a co-operative education in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd (CFV)

The CFV reflects and reinforces these challenges.

CFV membership peaked with the new Co-operatives Act which required co-operatives to introduce new rules. Paul Martin in a 2000 member survey predicted that many member co-operatives who joined the CFV during this period of rule change would not remain members when their rules were changed. The prediction was accurate and fulfilled.

The finances of CFV have been disproportionately dependent on a small group of large co-operatives e.g.

Bonlac

Genetics Australia

Gippsland Herd Improvement

Murray Goulburn

Pivot

Victorian Producers' Co-operative Ltd

Warrnambool Co-operative Society Ltd

There is a continuous challenge for CFV to reinvent and redevelop its relevance

Priorities Internal and External

Internal

Maintain and strengthen the success of australia.coop.

Develop an ongoing and used co-operative education program.

Maintain and strengthen public advocacy.

Revive Victorian Co-operative News.

Recruit two directors.

External

Work towards a decisive influence in government at all levels. Government policies should reflect general and specific potentialities of the co-operative movement and their requirements for development. Co-operative policies should ensure appropriate institutional support systems.

Participate in national and state debates and within many different areas to on what is best for our members and the co-operative movement generally.

Working towards Australian membership of the International Co-operative Alliance. ACCORD is a member of the ICA but is not a co-operative member-based organization. In recent years, the CFNSW did join the ICA for a one year period. The CFV has proposed to other State Federations that the CCA should be the Australian member of the ICA but to date this has not been supported by other Federations.

Co-operative Consultation

The CFV consultation priority needs to be based on a clear strategy and answers to each of these questions:

Why are we consulting?

What is the aim of the consultation process?

What is the priority between providing information, information getting, information exchange and decision-making?

Who will we consult?

Who are the stakeholders? How many of them will we consult? Will we and can we consult with members, former members and potential members.

How will we consult?

What mode(s) of consultation will we use – individual meetings, group meetings, a future conference and a member survey.

What will we be consulting about?

What issue(s) will we be raising in the consultation process and will this be documented? Will the consultation be about single issues or general and non-defined issues? What will we say about what we have been doing, our achievements and limitations and what we would like to be doing with what resources.

Where will we consult?

This depends on the mode of consultation. How long will the consultation process be? What is a short time period? What is a long time period? What are the strengths and limitations of a short and long time period?

When will we consult?

What time period is necessary for an efficient and effective consultation process?

Who will organize the consultation process?

What is an effective and efficient consultation?

How do we ensure the consultation process is both representative and meaningful and not hijacked?

SWOT

A beginning of this process is a SWOT analysis of CFV – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Strengths	Weaknesses
australia.coop	Low membership
Co-operative publications – australia.coop, Member Benefit, Our Energy, The Co-operative Formation Decision, What is a co-operative? and Why do co-operatives fail as co-operatives?	Limited income limits activities and achievements
Initiated joint Federation submission to Dawson Committee (V, NSW, WA and QLD)	
ICA liaison	Ignored in public policy debate.
Opportunities	Threats
Our Energy International Co-operative Alliance ACCORD	Continued demutualization of mutual businesses. Further demutualization of government policy
Development of an ongoing co-operative education program.	
Establishment of annual co-operative conference.	
Strengthen relevance of CCA	Ambivalent status of CCA

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